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SIPDIS

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STATE FOR SA/FO (DAS GASTRIGHT), SA/A, S/CR, SA/PAB,
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STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN, KAMEND
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CENTCOM FOR CG CFC-A, CG CJTF-76, POLAD
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TAGS: PREL PGOV PTER AF

SUBJECT: PRT/GARDEZ SECURITY WITHOUT GOVERNMENT
CONTROL: VISIT TO A REMOT DISTRICT IN LOGAR PROVINCE

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¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: PRT Gardez recently visited the remote Logar district of Azra, which borders Pakistan, to secure and remove an arms cache handed over to the DIAG program. ANP control is limited to the physical bounds of the station itself and the community's security is completely controlled by the tribal structure. This type of isolated and independent community, which can be found throughout the southeast region of Afghanistan, is an example of a place where the authority of the Government of Afghanistan (GoA) does not currently exist, but traditional structures are maintaining a peaceful environment. In the absence of a strong government presence, this is also the type of border community that might serve as a conduit for the insurgency.
End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Last month, PRT Gardez and maneuver battalion embarked on a four-hour drive through stream beds and winding narrow mountainous roads for an overnight mission to the Logar district of Azra to secure and remove an arms cache surrendered to the DIAG (Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups) program, which was stored at the district ANP station. Azra is the most remote district in Logar Province and the only Logar district bordering Pakistan. The district was once part of Loya Paktia (the former province consisting of present Paktia, Paktika and Khost provinces). It retains strong tribal structures and in the past was known as a

smugglers alley.

¶3. (SBU) The PRT was hosted by the district ANP station, located in the center of the small village nestled in a narrow valley. When the convoy arrived at the station, about 20 ANP officers were standing at attention in formation in uniforms clearly worn for the first time still dust-free and creased from packaging for the benefit of the visiting Americans. PRToff used the opportunity of the visit to discuss the security situation and the condition of the ANP. It quickly became apparent that ANP control is limited to the physical bounds of the station on

itself. The ANP reported that they had 42 police on payroll and one Russian jeep to patrol the district. They complained that they have no Afghan Border Police (ABP) stationed along the Pakistan border, which left the ANP district station responsible for securing the border. Without vehicles, ammunition, or issued weapons heavier than a Kalashnikov, they claimed they were incapable of stopping outsiders from coming across the border. They have no means to communicate with the ANP headquarters in Pul-e Alam. Additionally, they told us that the Czech AK 47 rifles that they were issued were unreliable (a common complaint among ANP in Paktia and Logar Provinces).

¶4. (SBU) Still, the ANP boasted there were no recorded security incidents and noted the tribes were an essential partner in this success. After further probing, the police admitted that almost all problems in the district were handled through tribal shuras. The tribes maintain security through

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the arbakai system (the shura selects and arms members of the community to protect tribal resources; it was in decline in the last century, but was revived by the Soviets to provide protection against the mujahadeen). Governor Taniwal in Paktia province is currently using this system to supplement the ANP. He is paying the tribes approximately USD40 per month per armed arbakai, who are usually embedded in the district ANP stations. In contrast to Paktia province, however, the arbakai in Logar are securing the area as part of their traditional tribal duty and not for pay. Arbakai coordination there with the ANP is also less evident than in Paktia. In fact, Governor Hashimi seemed surprised when PRToff noted that there were arbakai in the district and the ANP chief and his deputy did not address PRToffs questions about the cooperation between the arbakai and ANP in Azra, noting it is a special case.

¶5. (SBU) The partnership between the ANP and the tribes (four sub-tribes of the Ahmadzai tribe) is not limited to the use of the arbakai. The people rely on tribal shuras for conflict resolution. Even when an issue is brought to the attention of the police, in most cases, at the insistence of the tribes, the police turn the issue over to the shura for internal dispute resolution through Pashtunwali, the tribal code. When PRToff asked for an example of issues that are handled through the rule of law, the police mentioned a land dispute between two sub-tribes that was submitted to Pul-e Alam, the provincial capital, for arbitration.

¶6. (SBU) The sense of tribal control was reinforced when PRToff and a U.S. Army Civil Affairs officer met with a tribal shura. As soon as the verses from

the Quran were recited to open the meeting, the elder sitting front-and-center explained that Azra had not had a single security incident, but this was not due to the GOA or ANP. He said the ANP were nothing - only the tribes provide security for the area.

The tribal shura also complained that while they had kept security in the district, the ANP had discouraged NGOs from working. The ANP publicly challenged that assertion, but it was clear that the ANP did not feel they could guarantee the safety of NGOs.

¶18. (SBU) Comment: Strong tribal structures in southeast Afghanistan, like those in Azra, tend to result from geographic isolation. Because of Azras remote location, the tribes there are independent and self-sufficient. For example, the community has year-round water supply through mountain runoff, which also provides them with electricity created by a micro-hydro plant at least partially paid for by the community. This isolation and independence from government services also make it more difficult for GOA security and governance structures to extend their reach into these areas. At this time, the tribes are able to maintain peace among themselves

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and probably protect the ANP station, rather than the other way around. Without government influence, however, this area, once known as a smugglers alley. could be a conduit for the insurgency. PRT Gardez is trying to address the ANP communication issues and other ways to extend GOA reach into the community. End Comment.

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